

Akron City

May-August 2005

Lollipoploosa

High Tech with High Touch, a 40-Block Renaissance and a Takeout of Barbecue

From the Mayor... Promises to Keep

I've been spending more of my time in Columbus and Washington. As Mayor, I'm always fighting for Akron. As President of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, I'm fighting for all Ohio cities and the nation's cities as well.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors is non-partisan. Republican and Democrat mayors are waging the battle in Washington to save the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program; and Ohio mayors are trying to get our state government not to break a 70-year-old promise to local governments by eliminating the Local Government Fund.

President Nixon created CDBG to help redevelop neighborhoods. He saw it as a good thing for the whole nation — a partnership created by Republicans, continued by Democrats.

Over 10 years, CDBG has allowed Akron to rehab 1,000 homes, repair a thousand more, demolish 3,000 blighted buildings and build 150 new homes.

Thankfully, Senators Voinovich and DeWine supported CDBG as did Congressmen Brown, Ryan, and LaTourette.

The state's revenue-sharing plan is the Local Government Fund. But if the governor and legislature have their way, 20 percent of the money returned to cities through the LGF will be cut next January.

The Local Government Fund is a commitment to cities made by the state in 1934. Ohio was struggling during the Great Depression. Property taxes were not returning enough money to operate the state. The governor needed cities' cooperation because they would be unable to raise their taxes if the state imposed a new sales tax at the same time. Hence, the promise: "Help us pass a sales tax, and we'll share the revenue with you." The same promise helped Ohio enact its first income tax as well.

The promise has been kept for 70 years — by Republican and Democrat administrations alike.

For Akron, a 20 percent cut would mean that \$2.9 million of what we send to Columbus would not be returned. Since seventy percent of any city's needs are police and fire safety operations, to balance our



At his March 18 news conference, Mayor Plusquellic illustrates what a 20-percent cut would look like if the Ohio legislature slashes the Local Government Fund — 18 police officers, 11 firefighters, 4 medical personnel, and 26 other city workers whose combined salaries equal \$2.9 million.

budget, we'd have to cut the equivalent salaries of 18 police officers, 11 firefighters, four medical personnel, and 26 other city workers.

Don't be fooled by legislators who say that the cut is a "small" percentage of the city's budget. A large part of our revenue is from our sale of water and sewer services, and state law forbids us from spending those monies on anything else. What is "small," is that the state only returns through the LGF, 4.2 percent of the taxes they collect from us!

Many of our elected representatives seem to be obsessed with one issue — cutting taxes. Really, we should call it tax "pushing" because that's what it is — eliminating taxes in one place and pushing the burden down to us. We have nowhere else to "push" the burden. (For the record, I haven't raised income taxes in Akron for city operations in the 19 years I've been Mayor. The last time the city raised tax rates was 1981.)

Ohio is sorely in need of business tax reform statewide, to eliminate archaic regulations that prevent us from attracting new jobs. But there's a time when people in government need to be candid. In response to the cry, "We pay too many taxes," we need to tell the truth.

Cutting taxes may seem like a good thing, until you confront the truth:

- The last international study I saw showed that among 25 industrialized nations, the United States, on every level of total taxation, was 23rd!

- Our roads are crumbling, bridges are falling down, water and sewer systems are aging. The American Society of Civil Engineers has given America's infrastructure a D+.
- We are being asked to spend MORE on Homeland Security, but the very funds that support our police and fire departments are being threatened.

Our business community has been working hard to retain and attract young professionals. The Greater Akron Chamber has hired an expert who has told us that some of our most talented young people are moving to America's most heavily taxed cities. Not because they like paying more taxes, but because they want the lifestyle that public investment provides — public transportation, hike and bike trails, concerts and recreation.

Ohio's six biggest cities, including Akron, drive 80 percent of the entire economy of the state. Returning taxes paid by our residents is not only fair but faithful to the promise made 70 years ago.

So, feel free to let our legislators know how you feel. Tell them to return our taxes back to us for our safety needs. Tell them to keep their promise.



Donald L. Plusquellic

Akron City

Akron City is produced three times a year by the City of Akron Communications Department. The magazine and recycling calendar is distributed by U.S. mail to all residents of Akron by Keep Akron Beautiful, a not-for-profit corporation in the state of Ohio.

Additional copies of the magazine and recycling calendar are available through the Department of Communications, Mayor's Office, 166 South High Street, Akron, OH 44308.

Our Cover Photo...

...is **Bruce Ford's** shot of Lollipoplooza at Lock 3 last summer. The full schedule of Lock 3 Live! events for this year can be found on page 11.

Tell us what you think by replying to editor@ci.akron.oh.us

Or share your thoughts with the mayor at mayor@ci.akron.oh.us

Published by the City of Akron Department of Communications, Mark Williamson, director.

Publication services provided by Live Publishing Company.

Project Coordinator *Dave Lieberth*

Photographers *Bruce Ford*

Art Direction & Design *Blink Concept & Design, Inc.*

Contributors
*Robert Sberna
 Russ Musarra
 Chuck Ayers
 Joe McKenna
 Dave Lieberth
 Mark Williamson
 Billy Soule*

Distributed by Keep Akron Beautiful, a not-for-profit corporation, Paula Davis, director.
 850 E. Market Street
 330-375-2116
 e-mail: KeepAkronBeautiful@ci.akron.oh.us

Table of Contents





East Exchange Street near Spicer Street before and after townhouse development.



By Robert Sberna

Pointing to more than \$300 million in campus improvements during the past five years and the recent announcement of the Spicer Village housing project, the university is celebrating a “comprehensive makeover,” says Proenza. “The changes here are nothing short of awesome. Our brand-new Student Recreation Center and Athletic Field House are among the best in the nation. And our new Student Union has created a whole new sense of community. There’s a palpable feeling of success at the University of Akron.”

Akron Mayor Don Plusquellic points to the multiphase Spicer Village as an example of the success the city has had in attracting new development. With groundbreaking slated for this summer, the \$32 million project will include 112 townhouses, retail development and 22 apartments.

streets. Simultaneously, a mixed-use retail and residential development will be erected at East Exchange Street and Kirn Avenue. Additional townhouses will be built on Power and Crouse streets, with occupancy slated for 2007.

Redevelopment initiatives such as Spicer Village will play an important role in supporting the growth of the University of Akron and neighboring Summa Health Systems, says Ken Stapleton, director of the University Park Alliance, a partnership that was created three years ago to promote the redevelopment of the neighborhood around the university.

"Improving the campus and surrounding area improves the image of Akron and the way that people view our City," Stapleton says. "The ongoing efforts to enhance the image of Akron and its institutions will pay off in talent attraction and retention." In the case of universities, he notes, the attraction

The Spicer Village developers are optimistic that the new housing will attract downtown professionals, including employees of the University of Akron and area healthcare institutions. The housing will also appeal to university students, says Proenza. "While we were in the midst of a major investment in our own campus, we recognized that many students who don't live on campus or commute from home choose to rent housing near the university," he explains. "We noticed that these were hardly the places that parents would want their kids living in."

Proenza says that the development initiatives at the university and University Park complement Mayor Don Plusquellic's vision of revitalizing the entire downtown area. "The creation of new housing will generate a ripple effect that will help everyone in the community," he says. "It's a vote of confidence in Greater Akron."

Akron City

Trash 101 Weekly Recycling Program Makes It Easy to Remember

By **Mark Williamson**

If you scratch your head trying to remember whether it was last week or two weeks ago you put out the recyclables, scratch no more.

At customers' request, the City has made it easier for all of us to remember by going to a weekly recycling program. Started in 1989, Akron's curbside recycling program ran biweekly.

Public Works Director Paul Barnett said he hopes this will increase participation. "I think that by simplifying the collection schedule we are going to see the number of households taking part in this go up," Barnett said.

Approximately 26 percent of Akron households participate in recycling. Barnett figures that number will rise an additional 10 to 15 percent with weekly collection.

Keep Akron Beautiful Director Paula Davis wants to see greater participation.

"Recycling protects our environment, reduces our solid waste, conserves landfill space and energy and generates revenue. When we recycle, we all win," said Davis.

Recycling aluminum saves 95 percent of the energy needed to produce new aluminum from ore

and turns used cans right back into new cans. Recycled aluminum is used for food and beverage cans, aluminum foil and aluminum trays.

When metal food and beverage cans are recycled, they may become new steel products

such as cans, toys, appliances, tools and construction materials.


Recycling household waste (newsprint, cardboard and glass) nationwide would reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 850 pounds per year. Americans create an average of 4.62 pounds of waste per day, per person and throw away enough aluminum every three months to rebuild our entire commercial air fleet.

In this decade, it is projected that Americans will throw away more than a million tons of aluminum cans and foil, more than a million and a half tons of office paper and nearly 10 million tons of newspaper.

Davis reminds Akron residents to recycle, saying, "Almost all of this material can be recycled and turned into something useful again. There is no reason to dispose of it."

The City currently pays Waste Management \$21.87 per ton to process recyclables. In 2004, the company handled 4,950 tons under a contract that paid Waste Management \$28.98 per ton. Even with an increase in participation, it may not equal an increase in cost, due to the new and lower rate.

Recycle items picked up at your curb go to the Waste Management Transfer Station on

Fountain Street in Akron. From the Transfer Station, they then go to a facility in Oakwood, Ohio. For tips on recycling, or assistance with questions, call Keep Akron Beautiful at (330) 375-2166. 

Recycling Tips:

Remove and discard all lids from glass, plastics and empty aerosol cans

Use blue-tinted, see-through bags for plastics, glass and metal

Use brown grocery bags or tie in bundles: newspapers, magazines, corrugated cardboard, phone books

Keep recyclables five-foot distance from other trash for easy recognition

No Styrofoam®



Royal Arnold has been serving up barbecue at Arnold's Rib House since 1999.

Arnold's Rib House Is a Place of Taste

By **Billy Soule**

Walk in the door — even blindfolded — and you know exactly where you are. No other restaurant attacks your senses quite like a barbecue joint.

Since he retired from Sears in 1999, Royal Arnold has been serving up barbecue at Arnold's Rib House on North Hill, at 401 East Cuyahoga Falls Avenue.

The son of Helen Arnold, the late community activist and Akron School Board member, the chef is satisfied doing what he loves most: cooking barbecue.


Royal learned his trade at home. His father cooked ribs, his mother cooked ribs, and his grandmother cooked just about everything.

His menu features family recipes: pork or beef ribs, chicken served crisp, rotisserie, regular, honey and barbecued, as well as catfish, walleye and whiting. There are greens, baked beans, green beans, mac and cheese, coleslaw, potato salad, sweet potato Jo Jo's and, of course, homemade pies and cakes.

Because of some customers' diet restrictions, he uses special seasonings and no meat in his greens and bean dishes.

Special events and parties are served by the Arnold's staff of 10, made up mainly of sisters, brothers, nephews and cousins.

Arnold's Ribs are also enjoyed at local events, including Lock 3 Live! Along with the fireworks during the opening of Lock 3 on Independence Day weekend, Royal will unveil a new sandwich.

Arnold's Rib House is open from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Friday and Saturdays and noon to 6 p.m. Sundays. 



Akron's 3-1-1 Call Center staff includes (bottom row, l-r) Shannon Mize, Jaline Albert, Kathy Johnson. Top row, (l-r) Jacqueline Dennison, Sheryl Maslanka, Carla Brown, Dorothy Slabaugh, Justina Smith and Valerie Kozera

At the 3-1-1 Center, High-Tech Is Surpassed Only By

By Joe McKenna

In one of the City's buildings on Triplett Boulevard, you'll find the **hardest-working, friendliest bunch of know-it-alls** in town.

*3-1-1, City of Akron...
Sheryl speaking...*

Launched a year ago, the Customer Service Request (CSR) system gives residents a direct connection to non-emergency city service merely by punching in those three numbers on a touch-tone phone. From 7 a.m. until 11 p.m. weekdays at the 3-1-1 Contact Center, Akronites are connected to their city as never before. They can get the correct information about city programs and services. And they

can take the lead in quickly solving the day-to-day problems of urban living — from fixing a pothole to making an unsightly obstruction disappear.

Akron is the first Ohio city to implement the CSR system, a digital marvel of software and hardware fashioned by communications giant Motorola Inc. and tailored for residents by a dedicated staff of 13 customer-service request agents. This frontline of trained problem-solvers handles an average of 500 calls a day.

Customer service delivered in real time is “the side of the 3-1-1 system that the public sees,” says Acting Manager Dale Sroka. But there's more. By being the digital tie that binds 38 city departments, the 3-1-1 system also employs its software to measure the performance of each department, fulfilling Mayor Don Plusquellic's 2002 promise that this high-tech, high-touch strategy would be “the key to our ongoing efforts to deliver to our citizens the services they need exactly when they need them.”

...you say there are three dogs loose on the street...

Basically, this system begins with the resident's call and concludes when the correct information is provided or the required service is completed. At the heart of the



GIS is part of the 3-1-1 software.

system's software package is the informational reference database, explains Barbe Beaty, who is the configuration analyst at the center. “It works somewhat like [the Internet search engine] Google, but for our internal needs,” she says.

In her role as an “information architect,” Beaty works with Sroka and city department managers continually to fine-tune the call center's scripts that help resolve each resident's request. “Dale and I sit down with managers and find out their best practices so that we can set up the system to benefit their use and the call center's use,” she says.

“The citizens are our customers, and the departments are our customers, too,” says



Jacqueline Dennison enters data into the CSR computer program.



Justina Smith takes a call from Akron resident.

High Touch

Sroka, who has worked for the city for 30 years. "For example, the health department says the center has made its job easier."

Today's calls? We've had a junk motor vehicle... pothole... pothole... pothole...right-of-way obstruction...

Mission central at the 3-1-1 Contact Center is a configuration of desks, each of which supports computer screens and, of course, a telephone.

"There are a lot of routine calls," Sroka notes. "I would say that animal control is a big issue."

Because the Motorola-designed system even has GIS (geographic information systems), "we can call up your street as you're on line," agent Jacquelyn Dennison says proudly. More important, though, is that "the majority of the public appreciates when a government worker has the time to help," Dennison adds. "They hang up first, and that's rewarding to me."

As city government's ambassadors to its own residents, the customer service request agents literally set the right tone for services in the City of Akron.



Barbe Beaty and Dale Sroka are always looking for ways to enhance the 3-1-1 service.

"I'll get a call from a resident who's grateful that the problem was solved," says Dorothy Slabaugh. "They call back to say, 'The city department did this for me, and I just want to say thanks.' I make sure that the message gets back to that department."

While every day at the 3-1-1 Contact Center is lively, Monday is typically the busiest day for fielding residents' calls, according to Sroka.


Then there was December 23, 2004 — the day before a city holiday and the day Mother Nature decided to give northeast Ohio the whitest of white Christmases.

"Because we were having a holiday before Christmas, I told people to skip bringing in lunches, and that I would take care of lunch," Sroka recalls. "Then we had the heavy snow, and we had 2,997 calls between 7 in the morning and 11 at night. Power lines were

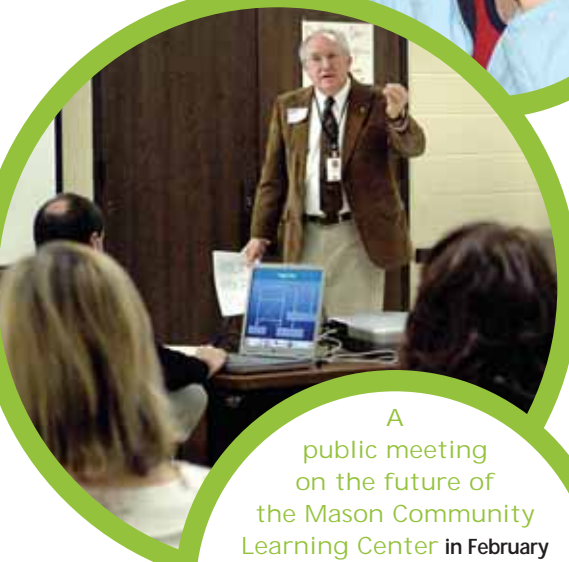
Other Links to 3-1-1

If you're using a cell phone or you're outside city limits, the 3-1-1 system is still at your service. Just dial 330-375-2311.

down. There were accidents. We were literally buried. People had time just to run into the kitchen, grab some food and run back to their desks."

Though the following day was a city holiday, the call center was back in business. "We took another 1,600 calls that day," Sroka says. 

This is A



A public meeting on the future of the Mason Community Learning Center in February was attended by residents, among them 5th Ward Councilman James Shealey (top), who questioned School Board Architect Jim Beal on design plans for the structure.

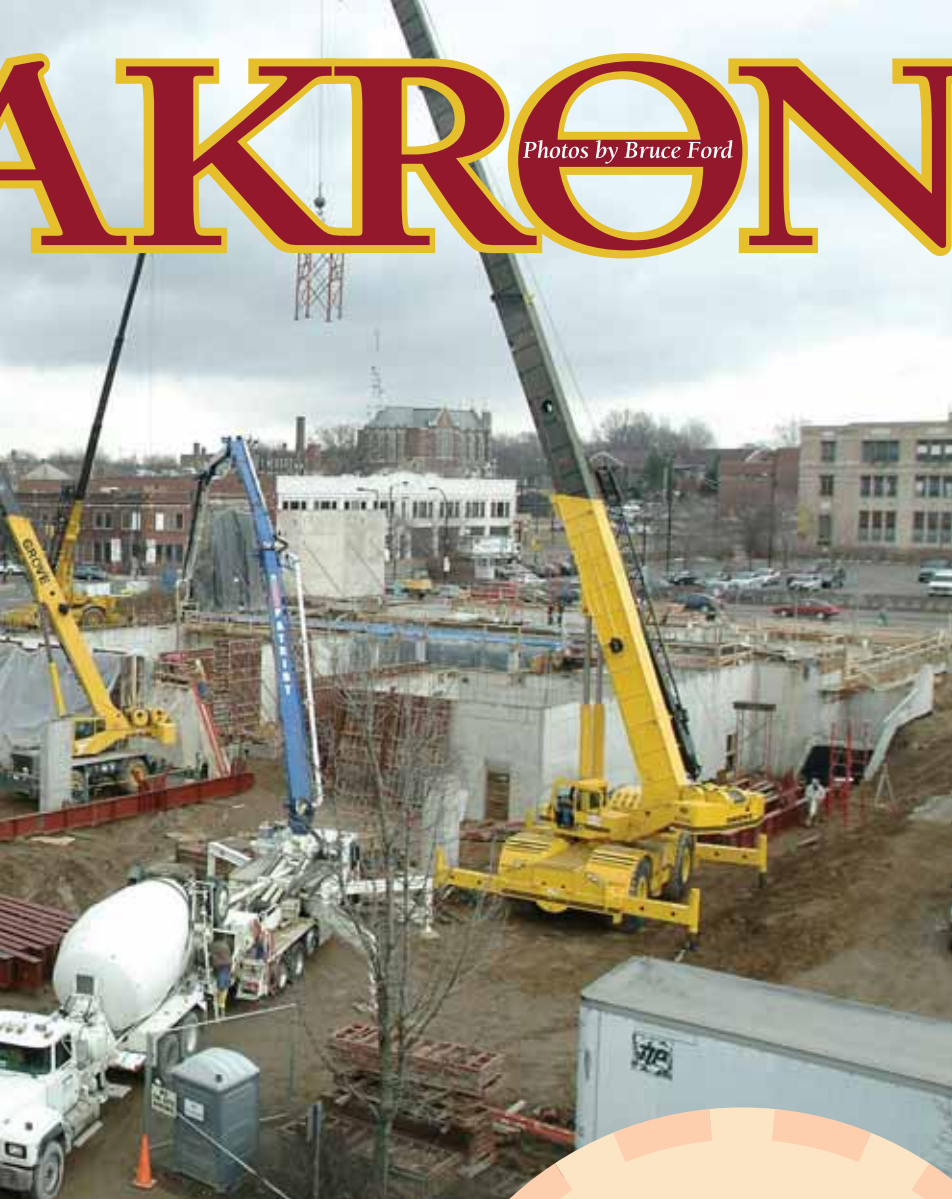


LeBron's King for Kids Bikeathon will be held through the streets of Akron Saturday, June 25. The Cleveland Cavaliers standout's inaugural charity fundraiser is expected to attract 2,000 bike riders who will join the NBA All-Star and his friends to raise money for Akron charities. Joining Mayor Plusquellic at the March 30 news conference were (left to right) Chuck Isroff, board chair, Summa Health System; Chris Dennis, race director; Gloria James; and Doug Kohl, president & CEO, Akron Area YMCA.



AKRON

Photos by Bruce Ford



Art Museum going up — Steel beams top concrete pilings being put into place for the new Akron Art Museum in downtown Akron by the Welty Company, readying the futuristic design for completion by the Fall 2006 re-opening.

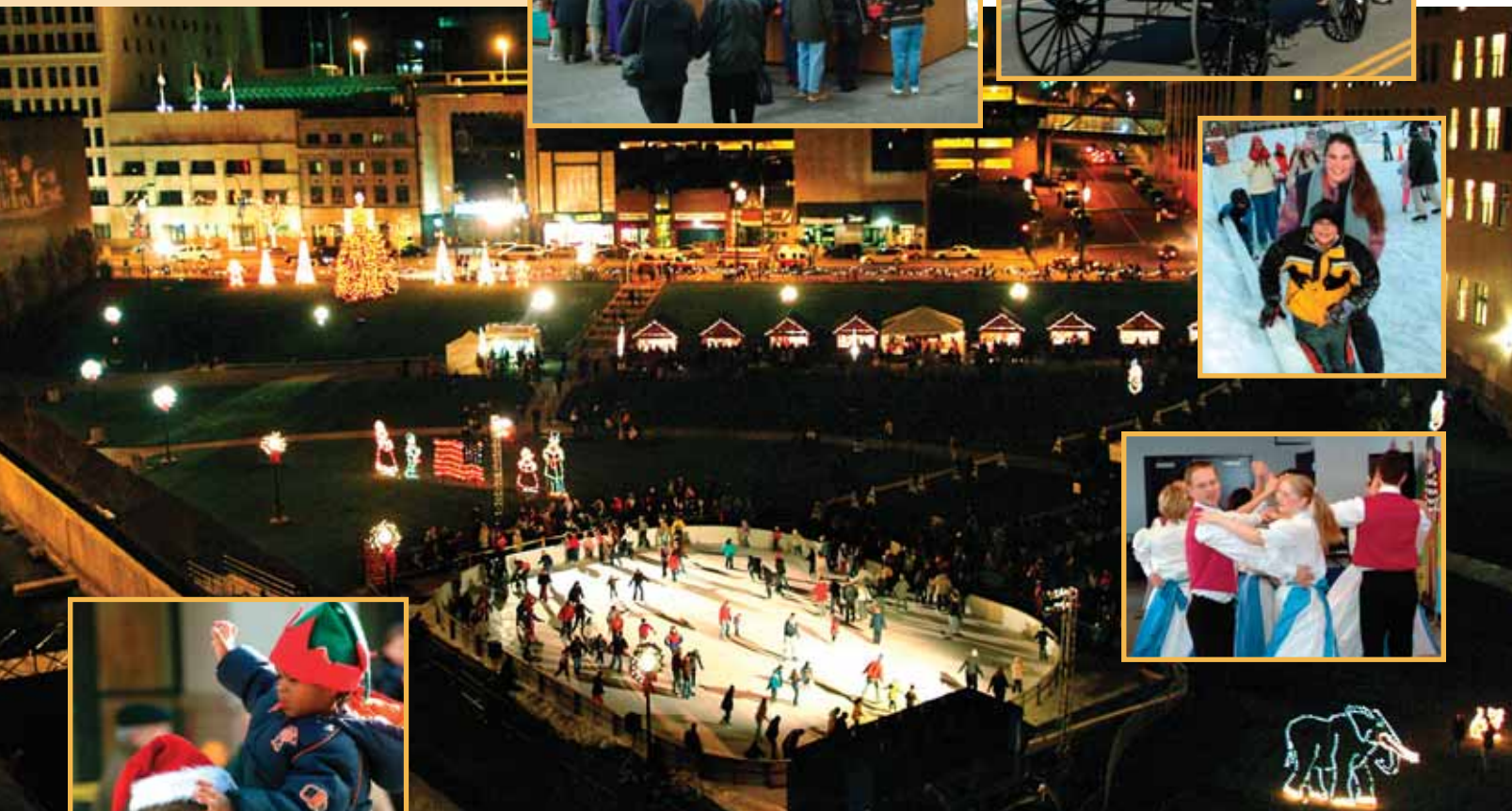
Beech Street Power Plant Coming Down — Demolition of the former Ohio Edison steam plant eliminates an environmental hazard and clears the way for expansion of the Ohio & Erie Towpath bikeway into downtown Akron.



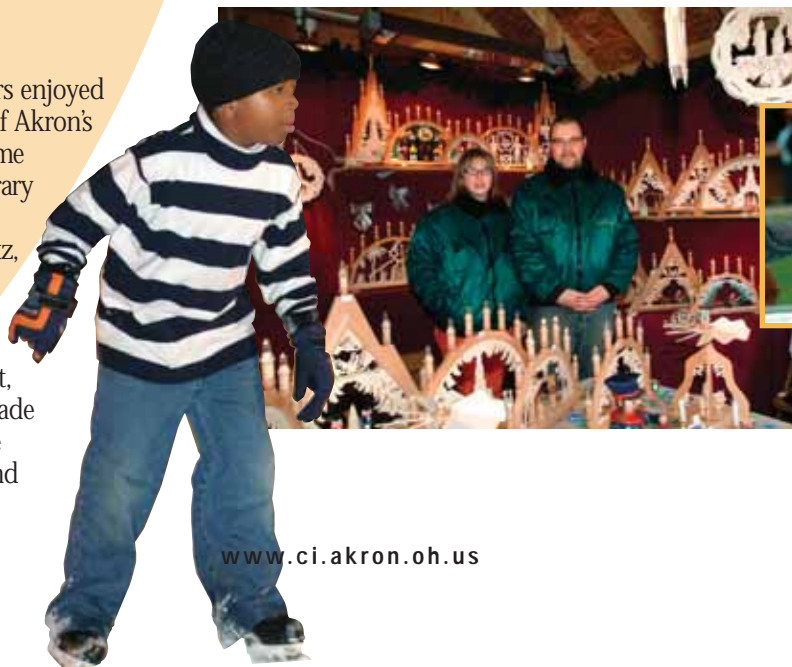
First Night 2005 played host to 15,000 visitors at various venues, including the new Akron-Summit County Public Library, where folk music was on tap. New Year's Eve was ushered in by families at non-alcohol events that included the Blues, a wedding and visual artistry in ice as well.

News

Holiday Season Brings Ice Rink, German Heritage to Downtown



A new generation of ice skaters enjoyed free admission to the City of Akron's first *Holidayfest*. The "Welcome Santa" parade (top) was led by honorary parade marshal Detlef Nonnen, Bourgermeister of sister-city Chemnitz, Germany, which sent 30 vendors and performers to the Chriskindl Market at Lock 3. Almost 50,000 visitors attended the inaugural event, Nov. 26 - Jan 15. Plans are being made for the 2005 version, which will see a larger ice rink, expanded hours and more vendors. 



LOCK3 LIVE!

July 1 - September 2
WONE's Rock The Lock
Free concerts every Friday evening
For further information,
www.lock3live.com

FIRSTENERGY STAGE

The Place To Be This Summer Festivals, Food, Fun and More



May-August 2005

Saturday, July 2

Akron Family Barbeque:
"Old-School Soul"
Morris Day & The Time,
Alexander O'Neal, Cherrelle

Sunday, July 3

Akron Family Barbeque:
"Red, White & Blues"
The Fabulous Thunderbirds,
The Colin John Band

Monday, July 4

Akron Family Barbeque:
"Celebrate America!"
Don McLean, Vance Gilbert

Saturday, July 9

Ragin' Cajun Fest
C.J. Chenier & The Red Hot Louisiana
Band, Nathan & The
Zydeco Cha-Cha's

Saturday, July 16

Summit Thunder with
Motorcycle Show
on Main Street. Dickie Betts & Great
Southern, Liberty Harley's Biker
Fashion Show

Saturday, July 23

Polka Heritage Festival
The Sound of Timko with The Second
Time Around Orchestra,
The Wayne Tomsic Orchestra,
The Frank Moravcik Orchestra

Saturday, July 30

Day of Reggae
Black Uhuru, The Ark Band

Saturday, August 6

Gospel Fest
CeCe Winans, Jonathan Slocumb

Saturday, August 13

Weekend At Woodstock
Richie Havens, Canned Heat, Mountain

Saturday, August 20

The British Are Coming
Classic British & Mini-Cooper Car Show
Peter Noone & Herman's Hermits,
Best of The Beatles: The Pete Best
Band

Saturday, August 27

Smooth Jazz Holiday
Richard Elliot, Pieces Of A Dream

Saturday, September 3

In The Mood
The Glenn Miller Orchestra, The
Sounds of The Andrews Sisters

Saturday, September 24

Special Event:
Lock 3 Reading Festival



For further information on Lock 3 Live! or to receive a
brochure call the Civic Theatre at (330) 253-2488 or
log on to www.lock3live.com.

www.ci.akron.oh.us

History

Pioneering Public Education

A Radical Idea in 1840 Became System Used Throughout U.S.

By Dave Lieberth

In 2003, when Mayor Don Plusquellic suggested that a dedicated portion of the city's income tax be used to rebuild or remodel every school building in Akron as a Community Learning Center, it was an alternative to new property taxes that no other Ohio city had proposed.

It was not the first time that Akron had devised a creative approach to public schooling. The very system of public education in Ohio and virtually every other state is another Akron invention.



ANSEL MILLER

In 1840, carpenter Ansel Miller called on his fellow pioneers to educate all children in Akron at public expense. A radical idea? Miller was threatened with violence by childless property owners who shuddered at paying for other people's children to go to school!

But the Vermont-born Miller, known for views for temperance and against slavery, fought back with what he believed was the righteousness of his cause. (Historian Samuel Lane says Miller was the first man to build a two-story frame building in Akron, "without the use of whiskey.")



REV. ISAAC JENNINGS, D. D.

When the Reverend Isaac Jennings joined his cause in 1846, the whole town of Akron (both the north and south villages at the time) paid attention. The Yale-educated pastor of the Second Congregational Church chaired a committee

that called on Akron to create a new system of schools — with its own separate governance and its own money — to enlarge the scope of studies, produce greater efficiency and provide greater uniformity.

The Ohio Legislature adopted the Akron School Laws in 1847, providing for a school board to be elected by the people to three-



Akron's Old Stone Schoolhouse on Broadway is a living-history classroom for Akron youngsters today.

year terms, who would in turn:

- Receive all monies due the schools;
- Hire teachers, contract for construction of buildings and purchase furniture; and,
- Set standards for curriculum and criteria for advancement

Before Miller and Jennings, common schools — public elementary schools — received little tax money and were run by the county. School terms were so brief that many parents paid for private schools that were open 11 weeks at a time.

At Akron's inception in 1825, there had been a single one-room frame school building at what is now Broadway and Buchtel Avenue. The Old Stone Schoolhouse would be built on the site, and it remains part of the community's history.

Historian Lane, who served Akron as Mayor and Summit County as Sheriff, arrived in town in 1835 to teach school for \$11 a month, plus all the fresh pork and buckwheat cakes he could eat — provided by the pupils' parents, who also shared sleeping space with the


Before Miller and Jennings, common schools — public elementary schools — received little tax money and were run by the county.

teacher in their log cabins.

The new school laws of 1847 proved so successful in Akron that a year later the Ohio Legislature extended the option of adopting the Akron School Laws to every city and village in Ohio. Indeed,

within a decade, most developing cities on the country's frontier and elsewhere began adopting the plan for public education invented in Akron.

Boards of Education hired teachers (by 1849, at an acceptable \$50 a month) and superintendents to manage the districts. Enrollment increased. (By 1883, about half of Akron's eligible children attended classes.) Yet, state laws before the Civil War also called for separate schools for descendants of African slaves, and black parents were required to raise money separately to educate their children.

Today, the struggle to find adequate funding for public education continues around Ohio, a source of much debate and controversy — one that began with a passion for education advocated by a pastor and a carpenter from Akron. 

Sherbondy Roots Run Deep in Lane-Wooster Neighborhood

By Russ Musarra/Illustration by Chuck Ayers



At least 35 trees line both sides of Ruth Avenue, a short residential street in the heart of Akron's Lane-Wooster neighborhood. The number is not as impressive as the size of the trees, which tower above Ruth's one- and two-family homes and form a canopy over the narrow street. The trunks of most, if not all, of the trees are as thick as the devil strips are wide.

Artist Chuck Ayers chose Ruth Avenue as the subject of one of his illustrations because of the trees, which create a majestic view, standing on the north end of the street and facing Antioch Baptist Church, at 670 Vernon Odom Boulevard, and because of the street's proximity to the Portage Path, which runs roughly parallel to and east of East Avenue.

The trees are old but, as the Portage Path confirms, the neighborhood is older. It predates the City of Akron. Long before the trees were planted and long before the homes were built on Ruth Avenue, the area was known by another name — Sherbondy Hill.

It was named for Levi Sherbondy, one of the area's pioneer settlers, who arrived from Pennsylvania in a small caravan of wagons drawn by oxen around the time of the War of 1812.

By 1891, according to the Summit County atlas, Wooster Avenue (now Vernon Odom Boulevard), East Avenue and Thornton Street were all in place, and many of the surrounding properties were owned by members of the Sherbondy family.

Best known kinsman was Charles Sherbondy, who attended school in a log cabin, also on the hill, and as a child enjoyed junkets to Akron, where he played and where he watched the Ohio & Erie Canal traffic at Lock One. He was working on a farm near Copley at the start of the Civil War and was among the first to enlist in the 29th Ohio Volunteer Brigade.



"He threw down his hoe when he heard Abraham Lincoln was calling for help," John A. Botzum wrote in a 1937 *Akron Times-Press* feature on the eve of Charles' 94th birthday. Charles told Botzum:

"One day in Virginia, Lincoln came to review the troops. I had never before seen him and was on guard duty when he came along. He was wearing a plug hat and I didn't know but what he might be a spy. I leveled my gun at him and told him to come forward and give the counter sign. He couldn't do it and asked to be taken to general headquarters. When he was identified, he smiled and said I had done my duty."

Charles Sherbondy returned to Akron in 1922 after the death of his wife. He's buried in Glendale Cemetery.

We concluded our examination of the area at the rear of the Miller-South School for the Visual and Performing Arts, where we were treated to a view of the remodeled and expanded Odom Boulevard Branch of



the Akron/Summit County Public Library, shown against a breathtaking skyline, complete with jet contrails and the Goodyear blimp. ©

Artist Chuck Ayers and writer Russ Musarra began their series of essays, based on walks around the community, in March 1987 in the Akron Beacon Journal's Sunday magazine. Ayers, a former Beacon Journal artist and editorial cartoonist, created the comic strip "Crankshaft" with Tom Batiuk. Musarra has combined his interests in history and writing into a career spanning 48 years, including reporting duties at both the Beacon Journal and the now-defunct Cleveland Press. Russ Musarra may be reached at rmusarra@neo.rr.com

Around the Town

"Getting the Lead Out" Is a Sign of Summer



The signs of summer in Akron this year won't be limited to baseball, swimming and picnicking.

The Akron Health Department will be using signs on Metro buses —

among other resources — to promote more education in the community on childhood lead-poisoning prevention.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors, together with the DuPont Co., has presented the City of Akron with its "Spotlight on Excellence" award. The first-place prize of \$70,000 will be used for the city's efforts to create a lead-safe environment in our community.


Akron's highly acclaimed prevention program tests children under age 6 for signs of poisoning that may come from the paint often found in older homes.

Lead, a highly toxic metal, was used for many years in products found in and around our homes. Lead may cause a range of health effects, from behavioral problems and learning disabilities to seizures and death. Children who are 6 or younger are most at risk because their bodies are growing quickly.

Of the 18,000 children under 6 in the City, fewer than 40 percent are tested each year. With the grant, the Health Department hopes to increase this percentage of children tested to more than 60 percent.

As part of the outreach, health educators will demonstrate lead-poisoning prevention cleaning, supply families with a Lead-Safe Cleaning Kit and network with doctors' offices in targeted zip codes by providing Lead-Safe Cleaning Kit coupons for use by patients.

In addition, the Health Department can replace windows and doors that may contribute to the risk of lead poisoning.

For more information, contact Karen O'Connor, Lead Program Supervisor in the Health Department, 330-375-2077. 

West Market Street Improvement Promises Many Lasting Benefits

By Robert Sberna



Ward 8 Councilman Bob Keith stands outside his West Market Street business in Ward 1 with Two Amigos owner Chuck Kyle and resident Frank Stams.

A long-range improvement project for West Market Street will result in some traffic congestion in the short-term, but will yield lasting benefits for commuters, area businesses and city residents.

Along with widening and resurfacing a half-mile stretch of West Market from Hawkins Avenue to Pershing Avenue, the \$4.3 million project includes numerous streetscape upgrades.

"This will be the kind of work that we've been doing on other sections of West Market," explains Michael Madonio, design division manager of Akron's Engineering Bureau. "It's a major arterial that goes through the city, so the improvements are necessary. The pavement out there has gotten old and deteriorated."


Madonio says the work, which will begin in spring 2007, will include new sidewalks, concrete curbing and gutters, and the installation of a brick strip between curbs and sidewalks. "We'll also be planting trees wherever we can, and we'll be going underground with the utilities," he notes. "Relocating the utilities underground will really clean up the sitelines."

While orange construction barrels are the bane of commuters, the City will work very hard to minimize inconvenience to drivers as well as area businesses. "There will be some lane closures temporarily, but we'll phase the project so that we can get it done as quickly as possible," Madonio says. "We'll

also be sure to maintain access to businesses during the construction. Obviously, it's critical for us to keep good relations with the many businesses along that stretch of West Market, so we'll be in contact with business owners on a timely basis to inform them of developments and progress."

The City will contribute about 20 percent of the project's cost, with the remainder provided through the federal CMAQ (congestion mitigation/air quality) program. Madonio explains that by widening West Market, traffic flow will be eased, thus reducing exhaust emissions. "The project should improve the quality of life for the area," he says. "There are also some safety issues we'll be addressing, particularly the various access points to the businesses. We want to reduce the number of traffic accidents at those access points."

The City applied for the CMAQ funding through the Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS). "I think it's great that the City is taking advantage of federal grants for these types of projects," says Councilman Bob Keith (Ward 8). "They need to undertake this work for appearance and safety reasons. It's been a number of years since this section of West Market was updated."

As an additional benefit, Keith says the road improvement will undoubtedly help to raise property values for nearby residents. 



by Russ Musarra

ENGINEER HONORED BY HER PEERS

The Society of Professional Engineers' Akron District has named EUGENIE BARTH, a triple-threat City of Akron environmental specialist, Young Engineer of the Year.

Genny, as she is known to her associates, is a project engineer in the Akron Engineering Bureau's Environmental Division. Division Manager PATRICK D. GSELLMAN reports that Genny fulfills three roles. She designs sewer and water projects and, as manager, develops the scope of service. Also, working with economic development staff, she shepherds grant requests through the agencies.

The honoree, a Boardman native, joined the Akron engineering staff in 1997, shortly after she received her Bachelor of Science degree in civil engineering from the University of Akron. She is a vice president of the American Society of Civil Engineers and a board member of the Society of Professional Engineers' Akron District. She's engaged to an engineer, BRIAN HANNA of Stow.

EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH

A tip of the Town Crier's hat to City of Akron workers DWIGHT VANVORST, JIM ANDERSON, DAWN EVANS and BERTINA KING who earned employee-of-the-month honors for — respectively — September, November and December 2004, and February of this year. (Awards weren't given in October or January, and my deadline arrived before announcements were made for March through the present.)

Reliable, dedicated and enthusiastic are words used to describe September honoree



DWIGHT VANVORST in his work in charge of maintenance operations at Mud Run Golf Course. He did what was termed an incredible job: keeping the course playable last summer

despite the season's heavy rains and other poor weather conditions. Dwight, who joined the city in May 2001 as a seasonal laborer at Good Park golf course, lives on the West Side with SUSAN, his wife of three years, his 11-year-old stepson, MARCUS, and the family dog, PUTTER. He enjoys hiking and, to no one's surprise, playing golf.

Engineering Technician JIM ANDERSON, November's honoree, played a major role in



the Middlebury Grocery Store Development, from the preparation of the successful application for Ohio Revitalization Funds that brought \$2.8 million to the project, to the planning and demolition of an

existing building at the site and, in concert with the developer, preparing the plans and specs for the Middlebury/Exchange Streetscape project that will provide the finishing touches to the project.

Jim, who joined the Engineering Bureau in June 1984, is described as a role model who demonstrates his flexibility by designing projects and having the ability to follow the projects into the field. He and his wife, LYNN, live in Ellet with their daughter, MEGAN, and son, BEN. He enjoys coaching for his children's activities, watching football at his North Canton alma mater and attending the annual Salt Fork trip with his co-workers.

December honoree DAWN EVANS, a Health Counseling Division secretary, has a



beyond-the-call-of-duty attitude as demonstrated by her work as Coordinator of the Mayor's Office of Military Assistance, a voluntary position. Under her guidance, hundreds of packages have been sent to our troops in Iraq and

Afghanistan and volunteers have assisted several military families with household chores.

Dawn was praised for outstanding personal and supervisory leadership since joining the division in December 2000. She helped implement a new software billing system and, when budget reductions necessitated staff reductions, took on and quickly learned many new duties. She began her career with the City as a temporary clerk typist in the Treasury Department in November 1992 and became a permanent employee a year later and worked in the Purchasing Division before going Health Counseling. Dawn and her husband, CLINT, have been married 17 years. She has two stepsons, C.J. and CHRIS. She is active in her church and enjoys golf, bowling and shopping.

Detective BERTINA KING, February's honoree, is described as a go-to person on and off the job. An Akron police officer since July 1991, she joined the Detective Bureau in June 1997 and specializes in investigating serious crimes against people — homicides, rapes, robberies and felonious assaults. Bertina's people skills make her an excellent interviewer and interrogator and have resulted in her being assigned to handle or assist in every high-profile homicide investigated by her unit. Her outstanding work record and abilities as an investigator made her a valuable resource to new local programs such as Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) and Developing Options for Violent Emergencies (DOVE).



Bertina is active at her church, The House of the Lord, and has coached the cheerleading squad at Buchtel High School, where she still mentors students. She also breeds and raises American Kennel Club champion quality English Bulldogs. ©

Akron City

Keeping Akron Beautiful in 2005!

We received many wonderful photographs and comments in 2004 from residents who planted their Keep Akron Beautiful seeds and produced beautiful, tall zinnias.

A packet of seeds is enclosed with this issue for you to plant in your yard. A green thumb is not required!

When the flowers start growing, send us a photo. Or, drop us a note, and we'll take the pictures. Write editor@ci.akron.oh.us or call K.A.B. at 330-375-2116.



Akron City Magazine was made possible through the generosity of these caring sponsors...

